

# **SOCIALIST STUDIES**

**NO. 10**

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**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF**

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN**

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## THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

### OBJECT

*The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.*

### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

#### THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...  
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,  
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

## IS THE EXPLOITATION OF THE WORKERS INCREASING ?

An article in the June 1993 issue of the *Socialist Standard*, journal of the Socialist Party, says that it is. In the article *Exploitation Goes Up*, A.L.B. (Mr. A. Buick) uses Value Added Tax figures published in the official Annual Abstract of Statistics to prove that whereas, in 1981, the workers' share in what they produced was 59% and the capitalists' share was 41%, the workers' share in 1990 had fallen to 53.8% and the capitalists' share had risen to 46.2%. It is questionable whether these V. A. T. figures give a valid result about exploitation, but we do not need to go into that because the use Mr. Buick makes of them is itself open to conclusive objections.

To start with they relate only to manufacture and to the 5 million workers employed in manufacture: they take no account of the 22 million workers employed in other industries, including building, agriculture, transport and communication, banking, finance and insurance, central and local government administration etc. It is merely Mr. Buick's assumption that what is true of manufacture will apply equally everywhere else. Secondly, while the total national labour-force has been increasing over the years, British manufacture has been a shrinking industry, unable to stand up to the cheaper manufactures offered by foreign countries. Its present labour-force of 5 million compares with 9 million in 1959.

Thirdly, Mr. Buick assumes that since 1981 there has been, in the manufacturing industries, a continuous trend towards the workers receiving a smaller share of what they produce, but his own figures fall short of supporting his argument. In the table his article con-

tains headed '*Worker's Share in Product %*' the figures for the latest two years show the workers' share *rising* not falling. It rose between 1988 and 1989 from 50.7% to 51.2% and rose again between 1989 and 1990 from 51.2% to 53.8%.

It may well turn out that Mr. Buick's assumption of a longish downward trend for wages is mistaken, and that what we shall see is short periodic fluctuations up and down, often due to the fact that profits are much more volatile than the income of the working class. In a depression profits fall faster and further, and when recovery takes place they move up correspondingly faster than wages.

It is strange that we should try to find out what is happening to the rate of exploitation of the whole British working class by Mr. Buick's indirect method based on V.A.T. in manufacture, and then assume it applies to the whole 27 million work force, especially strange when official figures are readily accessible in the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* and the *Monthly Digests* giving us the direct official calculations. To get the true overall picture, we need to look at the official figures showing, year by year, what percentage of the National Income is received by the working class, (the employed and self employed), and what percentage is company profits and surpluses of nationalised industries.

#### Division of National Income (Total Domestic Income)

	1981	1985	1990
Type of Income	%	%	%
Income from Employment	66.3	63.4	64.2
Income of Self Employed	16.2	17.8	21.4
Company Trading Profits	14.0	16.5	13.5
Surpluses of Nationalised Industries	3.5	2.3	0.9
Total Domestic Income	100.00	100.0	100.0

The big rise in the income of the self employed and the fall of income from employment reflect the big rise in the number of the self employed from 2,119,000 in 1981 to 3,298,000 in 1990. The above table can be further simplified by combining income from employment with income of the self employed, and also by combining company profits with the surpluses of nationalised industries

Percentage of National Income	1981	1985	1990
Income of working class	82.5%	81.2%	85.6%
Company Profits & Nationalised Surplus	17.5%	18.8%	14.4%

Mr. Buick has a word to say about the length of time that workers work to reproduce the value of their wages and salaries and the length of time spent producing profits for the capitalists. He writes:

*"In every hour they worked 32 minutes to reproduce the value of their wages and 25 minutes working unpaid to produce profits for their employers".*

Translating this into a five day, 40 hour, week it would show the workers spending 21.33 hours reproducing the value of their wages, that is approximately 4.25 hours a day. Mr. Buick's party, The Socialist Party, does not agree with him. They claim that the worker produces the equivalent of his wages, not in a few hours a day (4.25 hours), but "in a few hours *each week*". (Socialist Standard July 1987).

So far we have been dealing with that part of Mr. Buick's article based, however misleadingly, on official figures. However there is more to come; a statement in his article is unrelated to anything of substance. He writes:



*"In any event what the official government figures confirm is what the workers involved will have known already from personal experience; that in the 1980s the reduced work force was forced to work harder to produce both more output and bigger profits for their employers".*

We can test these assertions against the facts. Between 1981 and 1990 the total income of the working class increased, in money terms, by 121% while the combined company profits and nationalised industry surplus rose by only 80%. So where are Mr. Buick's "bigger profits for their employers"? Between 1981 and 1990 Total Domestic Income rose from £221,388 million to £485,412 million, an increase of 119%. So the total income of the working class did a shade better than keep up with the increase of the National Income, and much better than profits.

Of course, though Mr. Buick does not mention it, most of all the above increases in terms of money merely reflect that between 1981 and 1990 prices rose by 78%. Allowing for this 78% increase of prices, the real income of the working class rose by 24% between 1981 and 1990. In every year average earnings rose more than prices. It is necessary to add that the course taken by wages and profits between 1981 and 1990 will not necessarily repeat itself in later years. The profitability of British industry largely depends on what happens to trading conditions in the rest of the world, not on the plans and intentions of British capitalists or of British governments.

If we wonder why Mr. Buick's article reaches such unsustainable conclusions about exploitation, the obvious and simple answer would be that he is not fully familiar with the official material available. There is however another possible explanation. Mr. Buick has

argued elsewhere that we ought not to "*paint capitalism in favourable colours by denying ..... that the workers are getting more and more exploited*". Perhaps therefore his article was an exercise in denying the facts about exploitation, in order not to "paint capitalism in favourable colours". Readers who want to read about Mr Buick's discreditable idea of propaganda are referred to the article "**Are the Rich Getting Richer and the Poor Poorer**" (Socialist Studies No. 4)

Finally it needs to be emphasised that however interesting the ups and downs of exploitation may be, we of The Socialist Party of Great Britain, are not in the business of trying to modify capitalism, but are seeking to abolish exploitation once and for all. The abolition of capitalism and its replacement by Socialism, as defined in our Object, is the only way to do this

## ENGELS on the MATERIALIST CONCEPTION of HISTORY

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure, that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders, is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch. The growing perception that existing social institutions are unreasonable and unjust, that reason has become unreason, and right wrong, is only proof that in the modes of production and exchange changes have silently taken place, with which the social order, adapted to earlier economic conditions, is no longer in keeping. From this it also follows that the means of getting rid of the incongruities that have been brought to light, must also be present, within the changed modes of production themselves. These means are not to be invented by deduction from fundamental principles, but are to be discovered in the stubborn facts of the existing system of production.....so now modern industry in its more complete development, comes into collision with the bounds within which the capitalistic mode of production holds it confined. The new productive forces have already outgrown the capitalistic mode of using them. And this conflict between productive forces and modes of production is not a conflict



engendered in the mind of man, like that between original sin and divine justice. It exists, in fact, objectively, outside us, independently of the will and actions even of the men that have brought it on. Modern Socialism is nothing but the reflex, in thought, of this conflict in fact; its ideal reflection in the minds, first, of the class directly suffering under it, the working class.

(Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* p 45-8 Swan Sonnenschein edition 1892)

## REPLY TO JULIAN PRIOR

We have received a letter from Mr. Prior which is not published here. In his letter he raises some issues which are answered in the below reply, these being of general interest to those interested in the Socialist case.

**Reply:** You claim you were 'quite shocked' to read that the S.P.G.B. considered some issues such as sexism, homophobia, animal rights etc. as 'trendy' and 'unimportant'. You further state that your gay and lesbian friends 'who have suffered the most brutal and oppressive discrimination' would not consider their sexual orientation as 'trendy' or 'secondary' to their class position.

However, you seem to forget what the basis and function of a socialist party is. The S.P.G.B. in Britain stands for the establishment of Socialism by a socialist majority through the pursuit of a definite

political programme within a set of agreed principles. As socialists we recognise that it is only with the establishment of Socialism that the various social problems facing the working class can be addressed and resolved. Class, class interest, class struggle and class consciousness are the areas of political concern for the S.P.G.B., not race or gender. Socialism is the only issue we are interested in. Our time and resources are spent arguing the socialist case to workers. Do your gay and lesbian friends do the same?

Social problems facing the working class like unemployment, war and poverty, derive from its subservient class position within capitalism, not merely because workers are of different races, genders or sexual orientation. As a class the workers are excluded from the ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, and are thereby prevented from developing the potential contained within the forces of production. Furthermore, the very way in which capitalism runs, as a class divided society run in the interest of a minority, itself creates strife, antagonism and various prejudices.

Since capitalism and its attendant social problems can only be ended by class conscious workers sending socialist delegates to Parliament to gain control of the machinery of government, our political programme and policy must reflect this. We are confident that Socialism with its harmony of interests will involve not only the abolition of class but also the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex. Membership of the S.P.G.B. is also open to any person, male or female, black or white; homosexual or heterosexual. All that is required from members is the understanding of and agreement with the S.P.G.B.'s Object and Declaration of Principles. Members are also expected to be able to defend these principles, and put the case for Socialism.

This has always been the policy of the S.P.G.B. As evidence of this fact we would like to draw your attention to the 1949 pamphlet "*S.P.G.B.: Its Principles and Policy*". This was written shortly after the Second World War, a war in which Jews, homosexuals and gypsies had been exterminated in concentration camps in vast numbers. Despite this the S.P.G.B. maintained the primacy and exclusiveness of the class struggle:

**The movement for freedom must be a working CLASS movement. It must be founded upon the understanding of their class position by the working CLASS. It must depend upon working CLASS vitality, intelligence and strength: Until the knowledge and experience of the working class are equal to the task of revolution there can be no emancipation for them. (P21)**

Your letter also raises the question of what you call the 'infighting' between us and The Socialist Party. The term 'infighting' is misapplied, it is not fighting within the ranks of socialists, but between one organisation the S.P.G.B., which like the founders in 1904, has only got one object ie. Socialism, and an organisation, The Socialist Party, which has now taken in the object of seeking individual reforms.

The achievement of Socialism requires that a majority of the working class come to base their relationship on the mutual interests of the working class, and come to see the necessity for establishing a system of society in which all persons will have direct, free access to all that Society produces, in other words the abolition of buying and selling. This twofold development will meet the needs of the various sectional groups you mention, something that the century old campaigns to solve the problems thrown up by capitalism, one by one, will never do.

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION, REFORMS & THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

We have received a circular written by S. Szalai, General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada, in which he proposes that Socialists should support women's liberation organisations, membership of which is in our view detrimental to the interests of the S.P.G.B. These are reformist organisations, and our attitude of opposition to these organisations, was set out in the first issue of the *Socialist Standard* in 1904.

Briefly, our opposition to all reform movements arises from our hostility to all parties of capitalism: Tory, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Communist etc. These parties exist to administer capitalism, and seek working class electoral support on the basis of an endless variety of programmes of reforms. All reform programmes have the problems of capitalism in mind and their purpose is to make capitalism run more smoothly and efficiently in the interests of both capitalists and workers.

Capitalism, during the course of its operations, continuously throws up the problems which give rise to the need for reforms. The sole object of the S.P.G.B. is to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism, and all our political activity is exclusively devoted to that end. We reject absolutely the fallacious view that a socialist can divide his political time by seeking to reform capitalism and standing for its abolition at the same time.



It is claimed that because some reforms are beneficial to sections of the working class, we have a duty to support them. This misses the whole point of our attitude to reform measures. We do not support good reforms nor oppose bad reforms. We are simply not in the business either to achieve beneficial reforms, or prevent their being taken away. This includes constitutional reforms, such as support for parliamentary capitalism against dictatorial capitalism. Political support for reforms is in direct conflict with the aim of the revolutionary party. If, as we claim, Socialism is the solution to the major problems confronting the working class, we must only commit ourselves to that end and do it *as a matter of urgency*. It is often argued that the workers are not ripe for Socialism, and have to serve some kind of apprenticeship chasing reforms before graduating to Socialism. This ignores the historical reality, which is that generations of workers in their millions over the past hundred years or so, have consistently voted for an almost infinite number of reforms and they are no nearer to the Socialist position. Far from being schools of struggle, reform organisations are pits of confusion.

This brings us to the Clapham based Socialist Party, the active membership of whom hold the same views on women's liberation as does the secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada.

It is often claimed that women's liberation organisations are in a special category because they deal specifically with women's problems, and that they are not political. This naive description of women's lib ignores the fact that their objectives are political and can only be achieved by political action. They are a lobbying group within the major political parties. By making the absurd claim that women's oppression is due to male domination (*Socialist Standard* July 1993, P 100) they divide the working class. Like workers else-



where they do not know how capitalism works or what Socialism is.

The active membership of the Socialist Party are at one with Mr. Szalai in their support for women's lib. organisations. In an article (*Socialist Standard* July 1993) entitled 'The Beauty Myth' the following appeared: *"Like the Trade Union movement the feminist movements of this century have been useful in fighting for improved conditions within the framework of capitalism"*. Obviously the editors of the *Socialist Standard* do not know the difference between trade union action, which is an aspect of the class struggle, and a political reform movement which cannot struggle at all, and is dependent on the goodwill of the capitalists. No reform measure can be introduced against the will of the capitalists. Trade unions can enforce demands for higher wages against the will of the capitalist by strike action if the circumstances are favourable. This involves the conscious participation of individual members acting collectively. They can compel the capitalists to part with a larger portion of the products of labour. Much of the improvement of workers' standards over the last hundred years or so has been due to trade union action. To equate the puny achievements of the many feminist movements this century with trade unions is a piece of stupid ignorance.

The Suffragettes (feminists) movement was a capitalist movement of propertied women seeking the franchise. They were opposed by the S P G B at the time. During the First World War they suspended their activity and became a strike breaking organisation and a recruiting sergeant for the Army, as well as handing out white feathers to those not in uniform. They did not achieve the franchise, which was extended to women over 30 in 1918. Women's reform movements over the years have achieved very little. They are totally de-

pendent on the women's sections within the major political parties.

In 1974 when the S.P.G.B. formally ruled that membership of women's liberation organisations was incompatible with membership of The Socialist Party of Great Britain, these organisations (imported from the U.S.A. in the late 1960's) had been campaigning for free contraception, abortion on demand and 24 hour nurseries for children, (among other demands); hardly earthshaking proposals. Free contraception was granted (although later restricted), and abortion was made easier, but it seems that some 30% of unmarried women ignore their existence. According to Mr Howard, Home Secretary, speaking at the 1993 Tory Conference: "*The number of births outside marriage has risen to 30% today against 5% in 1960*" (Daily Telegraph 6th Oct. 1993)

The Clapham based Socialist Party's support of women's lib. is a logical extension of its support for reforms. They supported the Polish Solidarity reform movement and called on the workers of the Balkan and East European countries to support political actions to remove capitalist dictatorship governments and replace them with 'democratic' capitalist governments. Its actions demonstrate its total betrayal of Socialist principles. The Socialist Party of Canada looks like going the same way if S. Szalai's letter reflects the views of its members.

## NATIONALISM AND WAR

Throughout Europe nationalism has become a violent force pitting worker against worker. Many commentators have blamed its existence for the cause of war. This is incorrect. Capitalism rather than nationalism, is the cause of modern wars. War can only be prevented by the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

Nationalism, as a social phenomenon, is an effect of capitalism. Capitalism is a social system, which is dominant world wide, where the capitalists from different countries compete against each other. In competing to buy or sell commodities capitalists need access to trade routes, mineral and other raw resources. They also need political representation and military protection from other countries. One of the functions of government is to act as the "the executive of the Bourgeoisie". Countries themselves are brought into being as the capitalists perceive the need for a united, cohesive and central organisation, with which they can oppose or resist foreign groups of capitalists. Marx saw and described the growth of the modern country thus:

*Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, become lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interest, one frontier and one customs tariff. (Communist Manifesto P 64 SPGB edition 1948).*

Governments pursue foreign policy which favours the general or particular interests of the capitalists against other nation states. As a consequence one nation state or a group of nations is always in

conflict with another. When conflicts cannot be resolved diplomatically, or by other means, then war occurs. Of course, when war takes place, the capitalists have to call on the workers to do the fighting, and to provide the means to carry on a war. To do this the capitalist needs the support of the workers, and nationalism is the process through which this support takes place. It can take many forms, from 'my country right or wrong', to defending 'democracy' against fascism. Many reasons can and have been used to justify war, for example religion, race, ideological differences etc. None of them causes of war.

Weak forms of nationalism exist outside periods of war, as for example at sporting events. Non socialist workers accept capitalism because they do not know any alternative, they identify with the national capitalist, not realising that their social problems arise from the class nature of society. Loss of jobs are often blamed on other countries ('unfair competition'), or on other workers. The squabbles between various national politicians is interpreted as a fight between 'us and them'. Others struggle against an occupying force or regime in the misguided belief that they are liberating 'their country'. That workers look at the world with this nationalist outlook should not surprise us. Under capitalism ruling class ideas predominate and add to the erroneous beliefs held by workers already. Ruling class ideas are transmitted through various social conduits, the family, school, places of work, the media, and in the main they are uncritically disseminated, assimilated and reproduced to the general detriment of the working class.

Nationalism distorts the workers' perception of social reality in that it prevents them from seeing their class position within capitalism and the urgent need to take conscious political action. In a letter to



Franz Mehring in 1893, Engels gives a useful sketch of how this illusion of social reality occurs.

*Ideology is a process which is indeed accomplished consciously by the so-called thinker, but it is the wrong kind of consciousness, the real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to the thinker; other wise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or illusory motive forces.*

Engels is referring to the beliefs of speculative philosophers and other idealists a current example of whom would be The Socialist Party based in Clapham, who supported Polish Solidarity, or applauded non socialist workers on the streets of Budapest or Leipzig in 1991, as they took political action for the interests of the capitalist class. Engels' notion of false consciousness is similarly applicable to all manifestations of nationalism. Nationalism is a false consciousness, it is an illusion. Workers who actively participate in the preparation or prosecution of war do so by not understanding the motives for war, why wars are fought and on whose behalf.

In the **Communist Manifesto**, Marx and Engels argue that workers not only have common interests independent of 'all nationality' but more importantly *have no country*. Workers have no country because they exist as an exploited class, owning little or nothing of the means of production and distribution within the country, and having to sell their labour power to an employer. As a class they are cut off from access to the means of production by minority private property ownership. What they produce as commodities is owned by another class. Commodities are not produced to meet social needs or solve social problems, but to be sold with a view to profit. When employers cannot make a profit production is curtailed or



stopped altogether, and workers are laid off and made unemployed irrespective of race or gender

Because workers have no social control within capitalism over how production is directed, they are also powerless in the face of competition between capitalists and the political machinations of capitalist governments. The result is that workers and their families are always faced with the possibility of war and the death and destruction it brings. Peace movements are futile within capitalism. Groups like CND cannot reform war and armaments away anymore than legal enactments can prevent periodic trade depressions occurring. Capitalism causes war, and war is the product of capitalism.

Unlike competing capitalists, workers have identical class interests with workers in all other countries. Workers do not own and control primary resources, factories, transport or communication systems, and distribution points. Workers have no need to protect things which they do not own, they have no strategic interests which require the engagement of diplomats or instruments of war. Workers have a common interest in the establishment of Socialism. One final quotation from the **Communist Manifesto** still holds validity today.

*The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite !*

## REPLY TO S. SZALAI

We have received your open letter dated 14th September 1993, and find ourselves in almost total disagreement with the views you hold. When the S P G B. was formed in 1904 it rejected the attitude to reforms held by you. In the first issue of the *Socialist Standard* in September 1904, it gave as the reason for recession from the Social Democratic Federation that the party was "*rapidly developing into a mere reform party, seeking to obtain the provision of free maintenance for school children*".

The S P G B. at that time claimed that it had only one object -- Socialism and nothing but Socialism (see *Socialist Standard* July 1911). Long experience has shown that supporting reforms inevitably attracts reformists to membership, with the consequence that they succeed in capturing the organisation that started as Socialist.

With regard to the trade unions, the September 1904 *Socialist Standard* stated that their organisations could only hope to "slightly-modify their condition", and urged their members to recognise their need to become Socialists, "for in no other way can their ills be redeemed".

It was also argued that their organisations would be valuable in the industrial reorganisation, following the Socialist conquest of the machinery of government.

## MORE ABOUT THE REFORMIST SOCIALIST PARTY.

As the Socialist Party of Great Britain founded in 1904 did not advocate or support reforms at all while the Clapham-based Socialist Party prides itself on supporting reforms, the latter's attempts to claim affinity with the principles of the 1904 organisation inevitably rest on specious arguments and misrepresentation.

One of the many clear-cut statements made by the 1904 organisation about its refusal to seek support for or advocate reforms was the following, published in the Socialist Standard in July 1911.

*"The Socialist Party of Great Britain as distinguished from every other organisation in this country is the party with Socialism, and nothing but Socialism as its Object. Consequently it cannot seek support for or advocate any policy of reform or anti-reform... such policies might attract those who do not accept the Object of the Party thus weakening its definite aim".*

A spokesman for the Socialist Party tried to get round this and other plain statements by arguing that you must "make the distinction between opposing all reformism and opposing all individual reforms". (Like arguing that when the 1904 party said it simply was not in the reform business at all what it really meant was that it was in the retail reform business but not the wholesale.) This is dealt with in the article:- **THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S REFORMIST POLICY PROCLAIMED.**

In their journal the Socialist Standard (March 1993) the Socialist Party puts a somewhat different line in an article ("Robbed Blind") by Mr. Coleman.

Basically Mr. Coleman's attitude is the same in that he says his party "is opposed to reformism but not reforms" (without defining the terms to show how such an attitude can be justified). But he concedes that at its formation the 1904 Party "was formed to advocate Socialism and nothing but". He argues that the 1904 party's attitude to reforms was changed by the controversy that arose about a reply in the Socialist Standard (February 1910) to a question put by "W.B. of Upton Park".

W.B.'s question was:-

*"What would be the attitude of a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain elected to Parliament, and how would he maintain our principle of 'no compromise'".*  
(Socialist Standard. February 1910).

The editorial reply to W.B., published in the same issue, was decidedly non-committal. It included such statements as:-

*"The Socialist Party of Great Britain is always ready to consider new facts and phases when they present themselves and therefore the question of whether Socialist representatives should support any such measures in Parliament is one we do not, in January 1910 pretend to answer."*

By "such measures" was meant proposals by one or other of the capitalist parties "that may conceivably contain some small advantage for the working class".

The reply also conceded "that there is room for differences of opinion upon a matter that, at the present stage, is only of secondary importance".

This reply met with opposition from some members, who formed "The Provisional Committee for advocating the revocation of the reply given to W.B. of Upton Park in the Socialist Standard February 1910", and circulated an "open letter" to members dated 13th May 1911.

The Executive Committee sent out a reply to the Provisional Committee on 5th August 1911 and the Provisional Committee replied in a further document addressed to the Executive Committee dated 16th August 1911.

In the outcome the Executive Committee's statement was approved by Party Poll and accepted by Conference. Members who supported the Provisional Committee left the Party.

Essential points in the criticism of the Executive Committee by the Provisional Committee were:-

*"We deny altogether that a member of our Party is elected to*



Parliament for the purpose of taking part in any kind of legislation, whether by voting for it or against it" and "we are unable to agree with the assertion that Socialists are sent to Parliament to assist in legislation, instead of working solely for obtaining control of the political machinery".

(Provisional Committee's Open Letter dated 13th May 1911)

They also accused the Executive Committee of introducing a new policy on reforms and implied that the knowledge that a Socialist Member of Parliament would act in the way set out by the Executive Committee would influence non-socialist electors to support him in elections.

The Executive Committee statement denied that they were departing in any way from past policy, and reminded the Provisional Committee that there was no question whatsoever of Socialist candidates seeking votes on anything else than the demand for Socialism. They also pointed out (Executive Committee Statement 5th August 1911) that the statement objected to, by the Provisional Committee had from the outset been part of the Party's Election Address for Socialist candidates standing at local elections. To illustrate this the Executive Committee statement quoted from the Socialist Standard (October 1906) as follows:-

*"And in the unique election address issued by the Party it is clearly stated that 'the candidates of the S.P.G.B., therefore, while quite prepared to use the local powers for such small temporary benefits as may be forced from the capitalists' hands for the workers in those districts, nevertheless do not seek suffrage for this which can only be a secondary business of the political party of the workers' and it went on to point out how little could be obtained short of Socialism'".*  
The Executive Committee summarised the situation by insisting that "The Executive Committee... has simply upheld what has been the policy of the Party since its formation".

The Executive Committee Statement carried by Party Poll in 1911 was re-affirmed by Conference 1948 (58-0).

At Conference 1971 an Executive Committee statement which "reaffirms the Party attitude on reforms and trade union action in the Statement of 1911" was adopted (22-10).



Coming back to Mr. Coleman's statement about his party's attitude to reforms in the Socialist Standard (March 1993) it is interesting to look at his version of the Executive Committee Statement of 5th August 1911. Distinction has to be made between what the Executive Committee statement said and what Mr. Coleman says it said.

This is what the Executive Committee Statement said:-

*"Any measure that might conceivably benefit the workers would only be dealt with, favourably or otherwise, as dictated by the advancement of our Object".*

This is what Mr. Coleman says that the Executive Committee Statement said:-

*"The reply given to them was that a single socialist or a minority of socialists elected to Parliament would not vote against all reforms but would vote as instructed by the vast number of socialists outside Parliament on the basis of whether such measures benefited or harmed the working class".*

It will be noticed that Mr. Coleman's version has "reforms" instead of "measures" and cuts out the "favourably or otherwise", so that while the Executive Committee Statement envisaged the possibility of voting against a measure that might contain some advantage to the workers Mr. Coleman's version implies that if it contained some advantage the Socialist M.P. would necessarily vote for it. The Executive Committee Statement made the decision dependent on "the advancement of our object".

All sorts of issues other than reforms can and do arise in Parliament, including war and peace, armaments and conscription. One vital issue that came up every year at that time was the Army Annual Act on which the enforcement of discipline in the armed forces depended. If not passed the crime of disobeying commands would have disappeared. (The Act is not now voted upon each year.)

It will be observed that the attitude taken in 1911 by the Provisional Committee was that a minority of Socialist Members of Parliament would stand aside on all such issues.

## AUDIO TAPES

We are pleased to offer the following tapes of Lectures, Debates etc that we have held over the past years. Some of the lectures were given by our members when we were still attached to Clapham. All tapes include the full lecture, and in most of them, a part of the question and discussion period. They can be purchased in the sum of £1.50 each, including postage and packing.

Please order by number and send your remittance (cheques made payable to C. May) to our Head Office - 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB.

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| 1. Industrial or Political Action -<br>De Leon and the Socialist Labour Party. | 1992 |
| 2. Rust in the Iron Curtain.   | 1991 |
| 3. Workers of the World - goodnight.   | 1992 |
| 4. The S.P.G.B. is hostile to all other parties.                               | 1992 |
| 5. Religion - the heroin of the people.  | 1991 |
| 6. The Rise and Fall of the Socialist Party.                                   | 1991 |
| 7. William Morris.   | 1992 |
| 8. The General Election.   | 1992 |
| 9. Marx and modern Capitalism.   | 1990 |
| 10. Marx and the virile ghost.   | 1990 |
| 11. The Recession and Marx's remedy.   | 1991 |
| 12. Which way Russian Capitalism?  | 1993 |
| 13. The collapse or recovery of capitalism                                     | 1993 |
| 14. The Stock Exchange, share ownership<br>and the working class.              | 1990 |
| 15. Debate. The S.P.G.B. versus the European Movement                          | 1993 |
| 16. The relevance of Marxism to the modern world.                              | 1976 |
| 17. Marxian economics. Capital - chapters 1-4                                  | 1970 |
| 18. The crisis of capitalism.  | 1976 |

## LECTURE LIST - 1993

- SUNDAY, 31st October KEYNES, MARX AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY.  
Speaker: E. Hardy
- SUNDAY 14th November KARL MARX AND THE PARIS COMMUNARDS  
Speaker: H. Young
- SUNDAY 28th November LABOUR PARTY'S NEW IMAGE  
Speaker: C. May
- SUNDAY 12th December DEBATE WITH LIBERAL PARTY  
"LIBERALISM OR SOCIALISM"  
Liberal Speaker: N. Brown  
S.P.G.B. Speaker: To be announced

All meetings will commence at 3 p.m. with adequate time for questions and discussion.

MARCHMONT COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
62 Marchmont Street, London WC1.  
(5 minutes from Russell Square Tube Station)..





## THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays in the month.

7.30 pm Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, NW6.

Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH meets on the 4th Tuesday of month.

6 pm Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1

Correspondence to the Secretary, S.P.G.B., 31 Caernarvon Road, Eynsbury, St. Neots, Cambs. PE19 2RN

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome. Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities should contact the Secretary.

## FURTHER LITERATURE AVAILABLE

Socialist Studies nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9.

Turmoil in Russia (leaflet)

Available on receipt of large s.a.e.

Questions of the Day pamphlet:-

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects

No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.

No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.

No.4. The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Trade Unions.

(30p each, post paid)

## MARXIAN CLASSICS

Wage labour and Capital

Wages Price and Profit

Socialism Utopian and Scientific

There are a number of cassette tapes (available on application) of various lectures together with questions and discussion. Subjects include; Recession, Trade Unions, Pollution, William Morris, Daniel De Leon and several others. For details please contact Branch Secretary.